

Adult Literacy Contact Centre NEWSLETTER



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A project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C.

Ministries Want Response to Faris Report

The provincial Ministry of Education and Ministry Responsible for Multiculturalism and Human Rights; and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology are seeking a wide public response to a recent report on adult and continuing education in B.C.

The report, by education consultant Dr. Ron Faris, *Lifelong Learning for the 21st Century*, was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and released in October 1992. (See our previous story on this report in the November 1992 *ALCC Newsletter*, page 1.)

The report contains 27 recommendations concerning four areas: a provincial lifelong learning framework; equity/access issues; guaranteed quality programs and services; and responsiveness to community needs. One of the recommendations is that the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) should be "the locus of responsibility for adult/continuing education" in B.C.

The Ministry of Education and the MAETT have appointed a three-member advisory committee to invite feedback on the report. The members of the committee are:

Kjell Rubenson (advisory committee chair)
Director, Centre for Policy Studies in Education
University of British Columbia

Peter Walsh
Director, Continuing Education
Quesnel School District

Susan Witter
Dean, Continuing Education
University College of the Fraser Valley

The advisory committee has developed a form for public response to the report. Approximately 1,500 copies will be distributed to the adult/continuing education field this month (December). The form asks for comments about the four areas of Dr. Faris' recommendations. Respondents are also invited to make their own recommendations that are not included in the report.

The deadline for return of the response forms is February 15, 1993.

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**Last call for
newsletter renewals!**

See form inside...

"Ministries" from page 1

For further information on the review process, contact:

Ministry of Education and Ministry
Responsible for Multiculturalism and
Human Rights
Room 316
620 Superior Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 2M4
Phone: 356-0386
Fax: 356-2481

For copies of the full report,
*Lifelong Learning for the 21st
Century*, contact:

Office of the Provincial Literacy
Coordinator
Urban Colleges and International
Education
Ministry of Advanced Education,
Training and Technology
2nd Floor
838 Fort Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4
Phone: 387-6189
Fax: 356-8851 ☐

Copies of *The Wind Cannot Read*, the book celebrating the writings of B.C. adult new readers from 1990's International Literacy Year (ILY), are now available free of charge from the Adult Literacy Contact Centre. The 194-page illustrated paperback contains stories, poems and personal histories selected from material submitted to the B.C. Book Voyage project, part of a worldwide event celebrating ILY.

Phone: 1-800-663-1293
(toll-free in B.C.)

Prosperity Initiative Looks at Literacy

A report commissioned by the federal government's Prosperity Secretariat to review the adult literacy field in Canada says the country's efforts "...are fragmented and, in some cases, flagging. National leadership and coordination is critically needed to support and increase the involvement of all those who can and should be involved in dealing with the problem of adult illiteracy."

The report, *Adult Literacy in Canada in 1992: Initiatives, Issues and Imperatives*, is one of the products of the federal government's "Prosperity Initiative," which was announced in the Speech from the Throne, May 13, 1991. The initiative is described as "an extensive process of consultation through which Canadians [can] contribute to the development of a consensus-based plan of action to help secure Canada's economic and social well-being."

The initiative is supported by the Prosperity Secretariat, a temporary federal government department under the jurisdiction of federal ministers Michael Wilson (Industry, Science and Technology Canada) and Bernard Valcourt, (Employment and Immigration

Canada).

The report, released in October 1992, was prepared in approximately one month's time by Kathryn Chang Barker of Kathryn Chang Consulting (Edmonton). Chang Barker is also chair of the organizational development committee of the Movement for Canadian Literacy, a board member of the National Adult Literacy Database, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in educational administration at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of the report was to review and assess current literacy initiatives in Canada, including programs, research, policy development, and advocacy. Four specific target groups were examined: aboriginals, immigrants, workers, and those who lack basic literacy skills.

To conduct the research, Chang Barker:

- ❖ surveyed the general literature in the field, nationally and internationally
- ❖ searched the National Adult Literacy Database
- ❖ conducted a telephone survey of selected Canadian individuals and organizations connected with literacy
- ❖ faxed a questionnaire (based on issues and recommendations found in the literature) to 72 individuals in the Canadian literacy community.

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The report's findings and conclusions include the following:

♦ The recommendations that the majority of questionnaire respondents thought were most important in descending order, were:

1. invest more in literacy education
2. recognize literacy as a human right
3. retain diversity of approach
4. set national goals/policy

♦ "...although there appears to be a great deal of activity in adult literacy...there is a feeling of despondency in the literacy community."

♦ "Volunteers have done a great deal towards advocacy and remediation; however, there is an urgent need to develop the field of adult literacy and basic education with trained professional personnel who can expect working conditions equitable with other professional educators...."

♦ "There is considerable controversy about the use of technology, especially computers, in adult literacy and basic education programs...The negative opinions are voiced largely by those who simply can't afford the luxury of computerized instruction in their programs."

♦ "...there is a problem for

students transferring from one program, institution or province to another. Because there are no standards, provincially or nationally, students have great difficulty in making program transfers." (When contacted this month, Chang Barker said she was unaware of the B.C. colleges' ABE Articulation process which, since 1985, has facilitated students transferring between B.C. colleges.)

Among the report's recommendations are:

♦ "The federal government should create a national office or department of adult basic education..."

♦ "... provincial and federal governments must accept that adult illiteracy cannot be remedied by volunteers and special projects."

♦ "Universities should examine their contribution to problems in the school system that result in adult illiteracy..."

♦ "Business and industry, whether owned by Canadians or by non-Canadians, must invest in the skill enhancement of all workers."

The report is available free of charge from:

Dianne Galus
Government of Canada
Prosperity Secretariat
Learning Division
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1H 0H5
Phone: (613) 941-2449
Fax: (613) 941-3093 ☐

* SEASON'S GREETINGS *

The Adult Literacy Contact Centre staff would like to extend season's greetings to all readers of our newsletter - both new and old. We look forward to receiving your 1993 news to share with our colleagues across B.C.

We will not be publishing a newsletter this January. Watch for the next newsletter (Vol. 6, No. 1) in early February 1993.

Linda Hackett, Coordinator

Sandy Middleton, Information Officer

Nancy Richardson, Newsletter Reporter

Melissa Woodward, Secretary

Adult Literacy Contact Centre Newsletter

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684-0624 Lower Mainland

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The Adult Literacy Contact Centre is a project of the Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and is jointly funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; and the National Literacy Secretariat.

The Centre welcomes receiving your literacy news by phone, fax or mail. We reserve the right to edit written submissions for the newsletter.

The newsletter is published monthly (except as noted). It is available free of charge to any individual or agency upon request.



A New Take on Social Studies

"Everyone can relate to place. This relationship was the starting point for involving students in writing about the places where they currently live, or from where they had recently moved." -- from the introduction to *Cities of British Columbia*, a newly-published adult basic education (ABE) fundamental level social science text by adult education and literacy consultant, Audrey Thomas.



The book, developed as a method of "introducing the outside world to the classroom or learning site," features writing by ABE students at a range of fundamental levels and abilities. It is augmented by tools such as photographs, maps, charts, statistics and illustrations. The book was

developed as a 1990/1991 B.C. literacy cost-shared project between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat.

Thomas examines five city areas in B.C. -- Victoria, Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Prince George and Kelowna. Each city composes a "unit," and within each unit, Thomas selects a topic "that makes that city special." For example, the Prince Rupert unit is divided into, "The most Westerly City in British Columbia"; "An International Port;" "A Fishing Centre;" and "City of Rainbows." The material covered includes the history, geography, and industry of the city, followed by samples of students' writing on their experiences working in fish plants and canneries.

A sixth unit in the book, called "Your Community," was included "as a model to give students all over the province the chance of participating in researching and writing about their particular city, town or neighbourhood." The unit contains maps (to chart local climatic regions and population) and suggests exercises centred around a community's history, industry and native heritage. Thomas suggests that students use an atlas to locate their community, and research the history of their communities by visiting a local museum, library, or historical society.

The book is designed for adult students working at the upper Fundamental Level of ABE, though, Thomas says, "parts may be suitable for use at lower levels and in ESL."

According to Thomas, "There has been a dearth of Social Studies materials at the Fundamental level of ABE and for use in community literacy programs. This book is intended to redress this situation."

Copies of *Cities of British Columbia* are available from:

Provincial Curriculum Publications
Marketing Department
Open Learning Agency
4355 Mathissi Place
Burnaby, B.C.
V5G 4S8
Phone: 431-3210 or 1-800-663-1678
Fax: 431-3381
(Quote order number VA0112) ☐

Plain Language Working Group

The Plain Language Institute (PLI) of British Columbia will feature a report on how British Columbians rate legal documents at the first of its 1993 Vancouver Plain Language Working Group meetings in January.

The PLI is an incorporated not-for-profit society founded in 1990, and funded by the B.C. Ministry of the Attorney

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General and the Law Foundation of B.C., to promote plain language in government, business and the legal community.

To fulfill its objective of providing a public forum for discussion of plain language issues, the PLI created the working groups -- "informal get-togethers of people with diverse backgrounds, who share a common interest in plain language." The meetings are intended to keep the public informed of the roles and functions of plain language in the community, and provide updates of the latest developments in the field.

The January meeting features guest speaker Nicole Chovil, an independent research consultant, on "comprehensibility of legal documents: perception and understanding by B.C. readers." In 1991, the PLI conducted a study to find out how British Columbians read legal documents, and their attitudes towards these documents. The study found that the majority of the respondents "often felt frustrated and angry" when confronted with legal documents.

Chovil designed and supervised a follow-up study (in the summer of 1992) in which PLI researchers interviewed and tested the original survey respondents. At the January meeting, Chovil will describe the study's findings and there will

be opportunity for a general discussion.

The meeting will on January 26, 1993 at the People's Law School, 900 Howe Street, Vancouver, from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.

For further information, contact:

Elisabeth Otto
The Plain Language Institute of B.C.
1500 - 555 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 4N6
Phone: 687-8895
Fax: 687-0018 □

Assessment Guide for ESL Literacy

A book designed as an assessment tool for English as a second language (ESL) literacy practitioners is now available to the literacy field.

An Approach to ESL Literacy Assessment is the product of a 1991/1992 B.C. literacy cost-shared project. The book was written by Douglas College ESL instructors Julia Robinson and Cecil Klassen, with input from a six-member advisory committee.

The authors describe the assessment as an "information-gathering instrument" intended to develop an individualized learning program and initiate a "learner-driven" learning process.

The 37-page coil-bound book is organized around two components -- the purposes and

objectives of the assessment process, and suggested techniques or methods for the interviewer. Five appendices are included which provide the user with, for example, a checklist for use in analysing a learner's skill development and a form for recording information. The book also contains a bibliography.

In the introduction, the authors state, "...literacy assessment cannot be limited to one standardized test of a pre-established set of skills. Rather, various 'literacies' need to be assessed, and not just any random set of 'literacies' but the 'literacies' that are appropriate for the learner's needs and expectations. And the learner is the best source of information for what literacy forms, skills, practices, and uses are most appropriate to include in her own assessment."

Robinson says the guide "will probably be most useful for practitioners in tutoring programs, in one-on-one situations, or in ABE programs with a large ESL component."

The guide was distributed in October to the fundamental level working committee members of the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology's Adult Basic Education steering committee and to B.C. college ABE administrators.

A limited number of copies is still available from:

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Cecil Klassen or Julia Robinson
Student Services and Developmental
Education
Douglas College
P.O. Box 2503
New Westminster, B.C.
V3L 5B2
Phone: 527-5175
Fax: 527-5095 ☐

Native Women's Issues Featured

A cooperative venture between a (B.C.) Latin American women's organization and the Native Adult Education Resource Centre (NAERC) of Okanagan College has produced a magazine and instructor's guide for use in literacy and adult basic education classrooms.

The 1991/1992 winter/spring special issue of *Aquelarre* magazine, titled "First Nations Women of the Americas: 500 Years of Resistance," is the product of a 1991/1992 B.C. literacy cost-shared project between the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and the National Literacy Secretariat. *Aquelarre* is a quarterly publication of the Latin American Women's Cultural Society of Vancouver.

("Aquelarre," according to a statement from the publishers,

means an "illegal gathering of witches.")

The special edition features articles by Native women from North, Central and South America, including some B.C. contributors. The 27-page instructor's guide provides suggestions for classroom use of the material and lists supporting materials and resources.

The guide was written by Don Sawyer, NAERC Curriculum Specialist and literacy instructor Carmen Rodriguez.

The magazine's introduction states that, "Five hundred years after Europeans invaded the Americas, *Aquelarre* wanted to participate in the continental movement which is celebrating the Indigenous resistance and has offered this modest space to Native women from all over the continent."

According to Sawyer, the magazine and guide were designed "for use in literacy and higher level ABE classrooms, but...will be of general interest as well."

Copies of both the magazine and instructors' guide are available for \$5.00 each from:

Native Adult Education Resource
Centre
Box 610
Salmon Arm, B.C.
V1E 4N7
Phone: 832-3221
Toll-free: 1-800-665-9972
Fax: 832-2771 ☐

ABEABC's 1993 AGM

The Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. (ABEABC) will hold its annual general meeting and conference April 14-17, 1993 in Fairmont Hot Springs, B.C.

The theme of the conference is "Doing it Right -- An Exploration of Good Practice." Sub-themes for workshop presentations are:

- ◆ Feminism and Literacy
- ◆ Theory and Practice: evaluation, classroom research, classroom practice
- ◆ Student Success and Personal Development: stress management, humour, and self-esteem
- ◆ Diversity and CAI (Computer Assisted Instruction): Autoskill, SARAW, Josten, teleliteracy
- ◆ Updates: Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology; Native education

The ABEABC urges members to book air and hotel reservations as early as possible. The deadline for room bookings at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort is March 14, 1993.

For further information about workshops, contact:

Carleton Scott
ABE Department
Selkirk College
Box 1200
Castlegar, B.C.
V1N 3J1
Phone: 365-7292
Fax: 364-0197 or 365-2132 ☐